



An Assyrian-Style Ivory Plaque from Hasanlu, Iran

Author(s): Paul Collins

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 41 (2006), pp. 19-31

Published by: [The Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20320658>

Accessed: 13/07/2012 10:46

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Metropolitan Museum of Art is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Metropolitan Museum Journal*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

An Assyrian-Style Ivory Plaque from Hasanlu, Iran

PAUL COLLINS

Curator, Department of the Middle East, The British Museum

BETWEEN 1959 AND 1974, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania cosponsored large-scale excavations, led by Robert H. Dyson Jr., at the site of Hasanlu, in modern West Azerbaijan province, northwestern Iran.¹ In keeping with the practice of the day, the finds were divided between the host country and the excavations' funding institutions, and nearly four hundred objects from Hasanlu entered the collection of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum. They included eight pieces of a remarkable ivory plaque carved in Assyrian style (Figures 1, 2).

Ivory was extensively used in the ancient Near East to decorate elaborate pieces of furniture such as thrones and beds. This form of decoration was especially favored in the Levant and Syria, where local workshops produced distinctive styles of carved ivories.² In Assyria (modern northern Iraq) during the ninth to seventh centuries B.C., ivory, although less popular than in the west, was also used for decorative elements of furniture and carved in a local style—the style represented by the Metropolitan Museum's plaque. Oscar White Muscarella published the plaque first in 1966 and again, more fully, in his 1980 catalogue of the ivories from Hasanlu.³ He interpreted the image carved on the plaque as that of an Assyrian dignitary, perhaps even a king—he suggested Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.) or Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 B.C.)—bringing an animal for sacrifice. I propose that the figure on the plaque is better interpreted as a wingless protective spirit, or genie, of a type known from stone reliefs lining the walls of Assyrian palaces dating from the ninth to eighth centuries B.C. Such figures were designed to provide supernatural protection for the king. Genies, alongside other traditional Assyrian scenes, of the king in battle or hunting or receiving tribute, were appropriate images for the decoration of a royal throne.

The Metropolitan Museum–University Museum excavations at Hasanlu were focused on a level of the site designated as Period IVB, where the architecture and artifacts were extremely well preserved. The phase represented by these remains dates from the ninth to the early eighth century B.C., when the site was destroyed by fire.⁴ Buildings collapsed, burying not only much material but also some 250 men, women, and children. Who brought about the violent demise of Hasanlu remains unclear. An inscription discovered at the nearby site of Qalatgah records the establishment of Urartian power in the region about 800 B.C.⁵ Urartu, a major kingdom with its homeland in eastern Anatolia, southern Armenia, and northwestern Iran, was a political and perhaps commercial rival of the kingdom of Assyria to the south, and it is probable that the Urartians destroyed Hasanlu in Period IV as part of their military expansion.

Five major burned-brick public buildings (and other smaller ones) were uncovered at Hasanlu, each comprising an elaborate entryway and a central columned hall surrounded by subsidiary rooms. In the halls there were brick benches along the walls, a central raised area (perhaps intended for a throne), and hearths. The scale and quality of the buildings suggest that Hasanlu was a major administrative and political center during the early centuries of the first millennium B.C. Indeed, thousands of astonishing objects made of terracotta, bronze, iron, silver, gold, stone, glass, and other materials were excavated within the debris of the destroyed buildings. Hundreds of fragments of carved ivory objects and furniture inlay were also discovered. They were carved in a number of styles through a variety of techniques.⁶ Some had been imported from abroad, in particular from North Syria and Assyria, reflecting Hasanlu's wide-ranging connections with other settled areas.

Among the many Assyrian-style ivories carried from Assyria to Hasanlu as elements of imported furniture is the Metropolitan's plaque. As Max Mallowan and Leri Glynnne Davies have written, Assyrian-style ivories are typically decorated with "subjects and persons familiar from the [Assyrian] palace bas-reliefs and



Figure 1. Plaque fragments with a bearded male genie carrying a young goat. Hasanlu, Iran, Burned Building II, Level IV, 9th century B.C. Ivory, 9.5 x 3.9 x .99 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.163.2a,b)

other stone monuments executed between the ninth and the end of the seventh century B.C.”⁷ Scenes of warfare, processions, and divinities are incised or carved, in low relief or, in a few instances, in the round. Simpler animal and plant designs known in Assyrian glyptic art and ceramics also occur on these ivories. Examples have been found at the sites of Nimrud, Nineveh, and Balawat, in Assyria,⁸ but the plaque from Hasanlu discussed here, with its fine modeling and

attention to detail, may be one of the finest known Assyrian-style ivories.⁹

The fragments of the plaque are carved in low relief, with details modeled and incised. A bearded male faces left, his head circled by a wide diadem, now heavily abraded. His wavy hair is carefully indicated by incisions. The crescent element of an earring is shown in his ear. The figure has a thick eyebrow and an outlined oval eye. A heavy beard frames his face, and

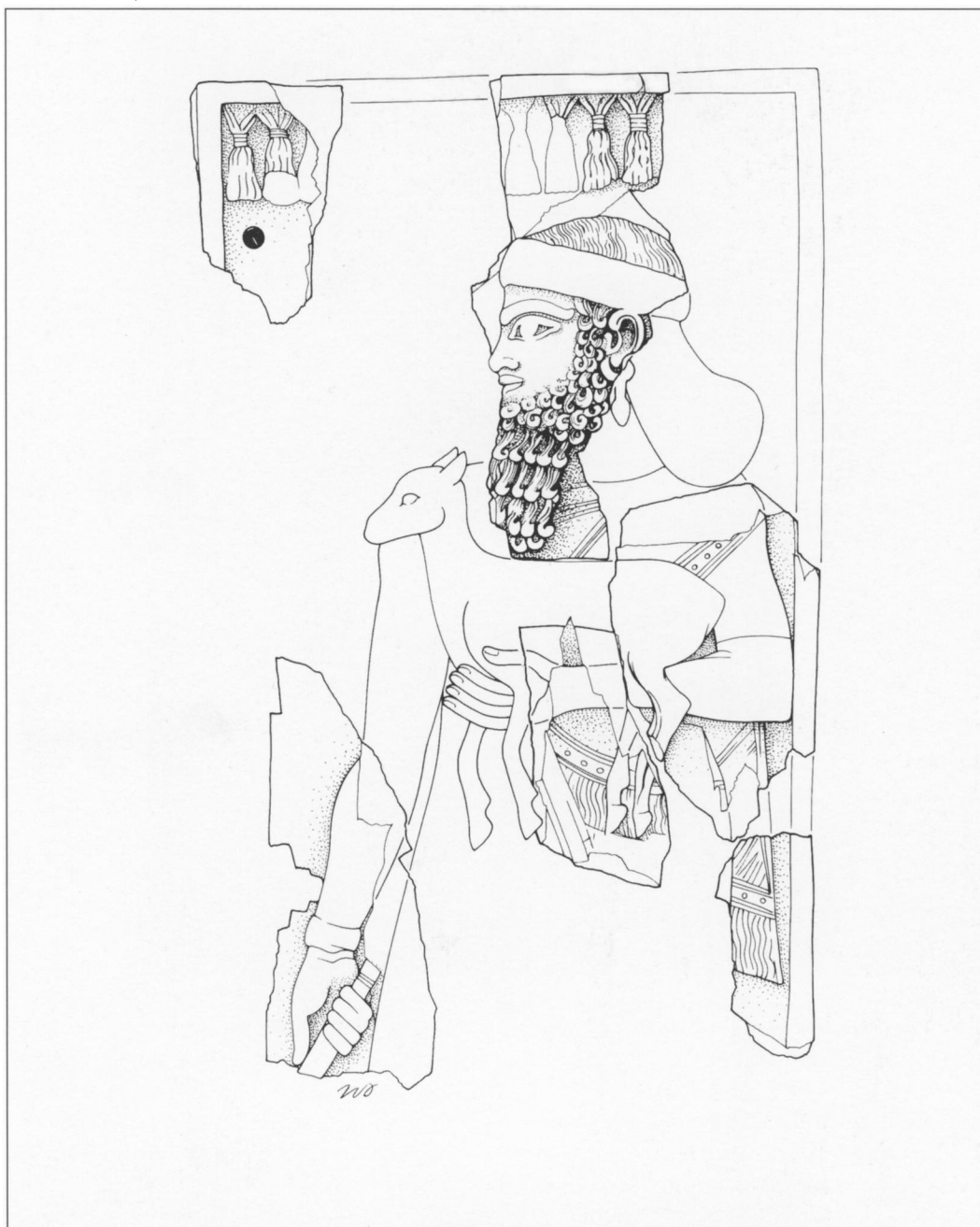


Figure 2. Drawing by William Shanks showing seven of the eight fragments of an ivory plaque from Hasanlu (Figure 1), with partial reconstruction

below the jaw the hair is divided into three layers of curls ending in a narrow row of smaller curls. He wears a bracelet on the right wrist and a short-sleeved garment that is fringed and bordered by lines and small circles. Part of the garment hangs down his back, with a line of fringes visible below the waist. He cradles a small hoofed animal in his left arm while in his right hand he holds a staff (or mace), with its knoblike end pointing down. Pendant from the upper

border are tassels. The upper right and lower right fragments preserve a raised border that suggests the plaque was rectangular.¹⁰ A dowel hole appears in the upper left corner fragment.

Analysis of the plaque's imagery in conjunction with evidence from Assyrian stone reliefs, wall paintings, and carved ivories suggests that the identification of the figure on the plaque as a dignitary or king deserves reexamination. The Assyrian monarch is



Figure 3. Relief panel with Ashurnasirpal II (left) and an official (right). Nimrud, Iraq, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C. Alabaster, H. 234.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.4)

characteristically depicted wearing a truncated cone-shaped hat, often circled by a diadem with lappets at the back, with a smaller cone on top (Figure 3).¹¹ However, figures in some reliefs from the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II, in Nimrud, that have been interpreted as depictions of the king show him wearing the diadem alone.¹² These include the figure of an archer, in a diadem with lappets hanging from the back, on two relief slabs from the West Wing of the palace depicting a lion hunt. Since Ashurnasirpal II wears the traditional fezlike headdress when he is represented hunting, the bearded figure with a diadem and lappets is probably to be identified as the crown prince; he is often shown standing and facing the king in scenes of ritual and tribute.¹³ In scenes of siege, the king, in his traditional hat, and the crown prince, in a diadem, flank a city under attack.¹⁴ Other dignitaries, and even prisoners of rank, are shown wearing diadems but without the lappets.¹⁵ The diadems, including that of the king, are wide at the front, with the upper edge curving down toward a narrow back,

although occasionally an important beardless official wears a diadem wider at the back than at the front. A diadem consisting of a plaited band of uniform width, which is sometimes twisted into distinct oval-shaped sections, is worn by one of the varieties of genies depicted in Assyrian palace reliefs of the ninth to eighth centuries B.C. (Figure 4). Genies take three principal forms: two of them are represented as bearded, winged men, with one type wearing a horned helmet, and the other a diadem; the third type is also winged, with a muscular human male body and limbs but with the head of a bird.¹⁶ A large frontal rosette often distinguishes their diadems, which can also be punctuated with rosettes along their length. The Hasanlu plaque figure's diadem is a broad band of a single width, the upper edge of which appears to undulate, suggesting that it may have been formed from plaited material.¹⁷ At the front of the diadem there is a slight swelling that may be the remains of a rosette.

In some of their attributes the anthropomorphic genies cannot be distinguished from the king or

Figure 4. Relief panel with a winged genie. Nimrud, Iraq, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C. Alabaster, 236.2 x 210.8 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.8)



bearded officials. Both the king and genies are depicted wearing earrings made from a single conical-tipped pendant suspended from a crescent. (In any event, the section of the Hasanlu plaque that might have shown the pendant is missing.) The treatment of the beard does not separate king from genie, either. Assyrian beards, worn by both humans and genies,¹⁸ are normally depicted on reliefs with three sections of tight curls—one around the face and two below, in rows separated by bands of wavy vertical locks. The Hasanlu figure has an extra row, ending in a narrow row of smaller curls. Variations in the number of rows are known, however, in the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.¹⁹ An extra row of curls appears, for example, in two images of Ashurnasirpal II as well as in the depiction of one of a pair of genies in a relief originally positioned behind the throne in the throne room of the Northwest Palace.²⁰

Kings and genies do not have precisely the same costume, however. The principal varieties of genies wear a short-sleeved, knee-length tunic with a tasseled

hem. Over the tunic is an ankle-length fringed shawl that covers the near leg, wraps around the body, and drapes the left shoulder, with the end hanging down the back to the waist. The shawl curves up at the front to expose part of the tunic and the far leg.²¹ This costume is different from that of the king, who wears a short-sleeved, ankle-length dress covered by a shawl. Like the genies' clothing, the king's robes are edged with embroidery and heavy fringes. Unfortunately, there are too few fragments of the ivory plaque to determine if the figure's tunic stopped at the knee or reached the ankle. The end of the fringed shawl hanging down the back, shown on the bottom right fragment of the plaque, is known from depictions of genies, the king, officials, and tribute bearers. However, hanging down the back of the king and the crown prince are also a counterweight for a necklace (also worn by genies) and long lappets attached to the rear of the headdress.²² These are not apparent on the ivory fragment.

In his lowered right hand the figure on the plaque holds a mace or a staff with a knob at the end, pointed



Figure 5. Relief panel with a winged genie and an official. Nimrud, Iraq, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C. Alabaster, 234.3 x 242.6 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.6)

down. Kings and officials are occasionally depicted holding a mace or staff with a round pommel at the top, sometimes in the form of a rosette, and with a tassel or loop at the bottom (Figure 5).²³ Genies are shown carrying similar staffs, held by their sides parallel with the ground.²⁴ Maces are referred to in ritual texts as weapons of certain supernatural beings and gods. Indeed, the staff held by the genies has been interpreted as a tool of exorcists to drive away evil.²⁵ Although it is possible that the king also holds a staff for apotropaic reasons, it may serve primarily as a symbol of authority regardless of the bearer.

Cradled in the figure's left arm is a hooved animal, the front half of which is missing. The animal is

depicted in an unusual manner, with at least one rear leg overhanging the figure's arm; in similar scenes depicted in stone reliefs and ivories, the animal is cradled with the hind legs behind the arm.²⁶ The only figures on reliefs and ivories cradling animals are genies; I know of no images where the Assyrian king or an Assyrian dignitary carries an animal in this fashion.²⁷ The most impressive surviving examples of genies holding animals are a pair of gate guardians (*lamssu*) that flank an entrance to the throne room of the Northwest Palace in Nimrud. They have lions' bodies and human torsos and heads, and wear horned headdresses.²⁸ A branch with three pomegranates lies in their lowered right hands, while cradled

in their left arms are small hooved quadrupeds; when excavated the heads were broken away or too badly worn for the animal to be identified.²⁹ Elsewhere in the palace, a number of genies carved in relief likewise carry animals. These genies wear the broad diadem rather than a horned helmet.³⁰ On wall reliefs flanking doorway “d” in the throne room, two genies with wings each cradle a deer in one arm and raise a five-branched palmette in the other.³¹ In Room Z, genies with two wings hold a goat in one arm and raise giant ears of corn in the other (Figure 6).³² In many reliefs from Nimrud depicting the king, incised patterns on his robes, probably representing embroi-

dery, depict winged genies with diadems holding goats.³³ A pair of genies holding animals has been reconstructed for the missing section of the throne-room facade.³⁴ In addition, a relief of a four-winged genie carrying a quadruped (perhaps a fawn) that was recovered from the area of the Central Palace at Nimrud had likely been removed from the Northwest Palace by a successor of Ashurnasirpal II.³⁵ The genie-and-animal image is also known at Hasanlu, where another ivory plaque incised in the Assyrian style depicts a winged genie carrying a kid. Unfortunately, the genie’s head is missing, so it is impossible to know if he wore a diadem.³⁶



Figure 6. Relief panel with a winged genie carrying a goat and an ear of corn. Nimrud, Iraq, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C. Alabaster, 224 x 127 cm. The British Museum, London, ANE 124561 (photo: The British Museum)

Figure 7. Drawing of a relief panel from Khorsabad with a wingless genie carrying a goat or ibex and a branching plant. From Paul Émile Botta and Eugène Flandin, *Monument de Ninive* (Paris, 1849–50), vol. 1, pl. 43

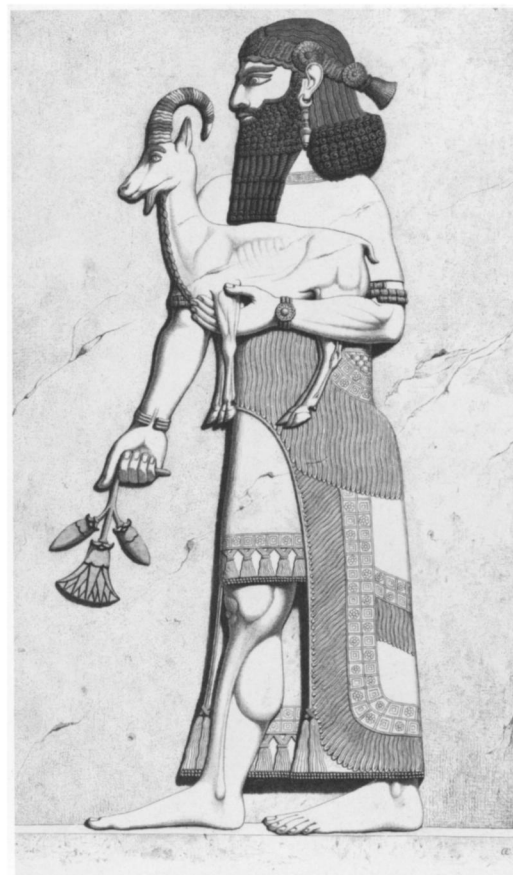




Figure 8. Relief panel with a wingless genie. Nimrud, Iraq, reign of Ashurnasirpal II, 883–859 B.C. Alabaster, 235 x 89 cm. The British Museum, London, ANE 124575 (photo: The British Museum)

Genies carrying animals had a long tradition in Assyrian art. Some 150 years after Ashurnasirpal II, genies with animals were carved in relief to decorate the palace of Sargon II (r. 722–705 B.C.) at Khorsabad (Figure 7).³⁷ An extremely fine cylinder seal in the British Museum depicting genies wearing a twisted headband and carrying a goat has been dated to the late eighth century B.C.³⁸ Julian Reade points out that the genies carrying animals are the only figures that occupy the same positions in different palaces; that is, they are placed at significant entrances.³⁹

The carried animal is considered by some scholars to represent a “scapegoat.” Known only from Assyrian ritual texts, scapegoats were living animals intended as the destination for malignant demons removed by an exorcist from within a sufferer. Following the ritual, the animal was killed. The idea that the scapegoat ritual was a prominent part of royal activity in Assyria, and thus worthy of depiction in Assyrian art, is based on the discovery of a quadruped, tentatively identified as a gazelle, under the pavement of a corridor in the Northwest Palace. The excavator suggested that the remains were those of a scapegoat.⁴⁰ There appears to be little to the claim, however, since the ritual text that refers to the scapegoat instructs that its skin be thrown into the street; there is no suggestion that the animal be preserved.⁴¹ A better interpretation of the animal held by the genies may be that it is an indication of the abundance believed to have issued from the gods through the king—an abundance emphasized throughout the decoration of Assyrian palaces, not only by the branches of vegetation held by genies in the reliefs but also by the so-called sacred trees and the repeated patterns of palmettes, cones, lotuses, deer, and goats in wall paintings, glazed tiles, stone reliefs, and ivory decoration.⁴² Indeed, it seems unlikely that a supernatural being would carry a sacrificial animal.

One of the critical arguments in favor of identifying the figure on the ivory plaque from Hasanlu as human is his lack of wings; wings, if present, would almost certainly be visible in the space behind the figure’s left arm.⁴³ However, although all the genies holding animals in the Northwest Palace have two or four wings, wingless genies are also known. They have the same dress and broad diadem as the winged varieties and, like them, flank doorways as protective spirits. In the Northwest Palace, wingless genies with diadems, raising their right hands in blessing and holding buckets in their left hands, flank a doorway in Room H.⁴⁴ In Room G, pairs of wingless genies wearing diadems flank two doorways. One pair raise their right hands

in blessing and hold a three-branched flower in their left hands; the second pair raise their right hands in blessing and hold staffs decorated with rosettes and tassels in their left hands.⁴⁵ Two wingless genies also decorated the entrance to the Ninurta Temple at Nimrud (Figure 8).⁴⁶

The absence of wings on these genies is often explained as a result of limitations in the space available to the sculptor.⁴⁷ There is reason to believe, however, that a lack of wings may denote a rank or distinction among genies of the sort John Russell suggests exists between the four-winged genie and the two-winged variety.⁴⁸ In the Northwest Palace both wingless genies and winged genies with diadems flank what seem to be major passageways for the king.⁴⁹ Wingless genies also appear in Assyrian relief carvings of later date. An example from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.) was recovered from the central area of the citadel mound at Nimrud.⁵⁰ A wall painting from an Assyrian palace at Til-Barsip (modern Tell Ahmar), in Syria, offers a roughly contemporary example: a wingless genie wearing a diadem, holding branches of vegetation, and accompanied by a human-headed bull.⁵¹ At the palace at Khorsabad of the late eighth century B.C., wingless genies are the most widely represented supernatural figure on exterior walls and inner doorways.⁵² They are depicted singly or in pairs, on either side of a stylized tree; in several representations the wingless genie stands behind a winged one, a juxtaposition that Pauline-Albenda suggests is indicative of wingless genies’ lower rank in the religious sphere.⁵³ The wingless genies wear robes and broad diadems similar to those in earlier examples, and these serve to distinguish them from the king and his officials. Some wingless genies represented at Khorsabad carry animals.

The tassels pendant from the top of the Hasanlu plaque are of a type known on Assyrian garments, but in no other surviving Assyrian scene do they appear in a similar position. Such tassels were also used on furniture: they are depicted hanging from the seat of the king’s throne in palace wall paintings at Til-Barsip.⁵⁴ A tasseled fringe decorates a chair of a woman on a late-eighth-century B.C. funerary stele from Zincirli and hangs from the seat of chairs in Syrian-style ivories from Nimrud.⁵⁵ Since the Hasanlu plaque had almost certainly been part of an elaborate piece of furniture, its carved tassels were probably complements to actual woven examples.

Images of supernatural beings were likewise suitable decoration for furniture, as carved ivory fragments, and thrones and chairs depicted in Assyrian reliefs

and wall paintings, demonstrate.⁵⁶ A number of flat ivory plaques from Nimrud are decorated with an incised image of a winged genie, either with a bird's head or wearing a horned helmet, holding a bucket in his left hand and a cone-shaped object in his raised right hand.⁵⁷ In Assyrian stone reliefs these genies can be shown approaching the so-called sacred tree, a protective symbol of fertility and plenty, but they also flank doorways or images of the king.⁵⁸ Such images, when used to decorate a royal throne, would serve to magically protect the seated king from dangerous supernatural forces. Two of the Nimrud ivory plaques incised with genies are straight at the top but rounded at the bottom, and have been interpreted as chair arms.⁵⁹ A similarly shaped, though fragmentary, flat ivory plaque from Hasanlu is also incised in Assyrian style but with a winged genie that holds a flowering branch and a small quadruped.⁶⁰ On a stone relief of Sargon, from Khorsabad, the backrest of a throne is in the form of a bearded genie, presumably a sculpture in the round, who carries branching vegetation in his right hand and cradles a goat in his right arm.⁶¹ Similar genies decorate a table on another Khorsabad relief.⁶² The animal and plant are probably symbols of divinely generated abundance, the conduit for which was the Assyrian king who sat in a throne decorated with such imagery.⁶³

The accumulated evidence favors an identification of the figure on the Metropolitan Museum's plaque as a wingless protective spirit that carries symbols of authority (staff) and abundance (animal) known from similar, though not identical, depictions of genies carved in stone wall reliefs within the Northwest Palace at Nimrud in the ninth century B.C. An increase in the relative number of wingless genies at late-eighth-century B.C. Khorsabad suggests that this form of protective spirit became increasingly popular. Since the figure on the plaque is wingless but must date from before the destruction of Hasanlu, soon after 800 B.C., it might be suggested that the ivory dates from the late ninth or early eighth century B.C. rather than being contemporary with the Northwest Palace, where winged genies are numerous.⁶⁴ However, our understanding of the function and ranking of these supernatural beings, on which their forms may have depended, remains too limited to hazard any such conclusion. It is likely that the finely carved Metropolitan ivory was part of a very important piece of furniture, probably a throne, perhaps sent to Hasanlu as a royal gift.⁶⁵ Thrones were considered appropriate royal gifts, as is known from Herodotus, who described how King Midas of Phrygia gave a throne as an offering to the shrine at Delphi.⁶⁶ Whatever the mechanism that brought this plaque with its

protective spirit to Hasanlu, it is, even in its fragmentary state, as Herodotus remarked about the Midas throne, "worth seeing."

ABBREVIATIONS

Albenda 1986

Pauline Albenda. *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria: Monumental Wall Reliefs at Dur-Sharrukin, from Original Drawings Made at the Time of Their Discovery in 1843–1844 by Botta and Flandin*. Synthese (Éditions Recherche sur les Civilisations), no. 22. Paris, 1986.

Barnett and Lorenzini 1975

Assyrian Sculpture in the British Museum. Text by R. D. Barnett. Photography by Amleto Lorenzini. Toronto, 1975.

Curtis and Reade 1995

John E. Curtis and Julian E. Reade, eds. *Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum*. Exh. cat., The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. New York, 1995.

Madhloom 1970

T. A. Madhloom. *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art*. London, 1970.

Mallowan and Davies 1970

M. E. L. Mallowan and Leri Glynne Davies. *Ivories in Assyrian Style*. Fasc. 2 of *Ivories from Nimrud (1949–1963)*. Edited by M. E. L. Mallowan and D. J. Wiseman. London, 1970.

Muscarella 1980

Oscar White Muscarella. *The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu, Iran*. University Museum Monograph 40. Hasanlu Special Studies 2. Philadelphia, 1980.

Die Rekonstruktion 1981–92

Die Rekonstruktion der Reliefdarstellungen und ihrer Anordnung im Nordwestpalast von Kalhu (Nimrud). 3 vols. Baghdader Forschungen 2, 10, 14. Mainz, 1981–92.

Russell 1998

John Malcolm Russell. "The Program of the Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud: Issues in the Research and Presentation of Assyrian Art." *American Journal of Archaeology* 102 (October 1998), pp. 655–715.

Wiggermann 1992

F. A. M. Wiggermann. *Mesopotamian Protective Spirits: The Ritual Texts*. Cuneiform Monographs 1. Groningen, 1992.

NOTES

- Excavations at Hasanlu by the University Museum were initiated in 1957, following a ten-day survey the previous year. The site was one of several in the region that were explored. Hasanlu was settled from the sixth millennium B.C. through the Achaemenid Persian period of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. After a long abandonment, the site was reoccupied in Islamic times, until the thirteenth century A.D. For a summary of the excavations, see Oscar White Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron: Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1988), pp. 15–19.
- For a general survey of the so-called Syrian- and Phoenician-style ivories, see M. E. L. Mallowan, *The Nimrud Ivories* (London, 1978).
- Oscar White Muscarella, "Hasanlu 1964," *MMAB*, n.s., 25, no. 3 (November 1966), pp. 124–25, fig. 2; Muscarella 1980, pp. 148–49, 200–201, no. 280.
- For a thorough review of the chronology of Period IVB and a rebuttal of a late-eighth-century B.C. date for its destruction, see Robert H. Dyson Jr. and Oscar White Muscarella, "Constructing the Chronology and Historical Implications of Hasanlu IV," *Iran* 27 (1989), pp. 1–27.
- Oscar White Muscarella, "Qalatgah: An Urartian Site in North-western Iran," *Expedition* 13, nos. 3–4 (Spring–Summer 1971), pp. 44–49.
- Four distinct styles of ivory carving can be identified at Hasanlu: a local style, an Iranian style, a North Syrian style, and an Assyrian style (Muscarella 1980, p. 1).
- Mallowan and Davies 1970, p. 1. Although the designs are similar, there is no exact match between the images decorating the ivories and those found on the palace wall reliefs (Mallowan and Davies 1970, p. 8). The discrepancy reflects variations in the working practices and traditions of different crafts.
- R. D. Barnett, *A Catalogue of the Nimrud Ivories, with Other Examples of Ancient Near Eastern Ivories in the British Museum* (1957; 2nd ed., with a commentary by Leri Glynn Davies, London, 1975); Mallowan and Davies 1970; Muscarella 1980, pp. 148–57, 200–202; Fu'ād Saif al-Iraqī, *Ivories from Nimrud* [in Arabic] (Baghdad, 1987); John E. Curtis, "New Excavations at Nimrud," *British Museum Magazine*, Summer 1990, p. 11; John E. Curtis, "Recent British Museum Excavations in Assyria," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd ser., 2 (1992), p. 160, fig. 12; Georgina Herrmann, *The Small Collections from Fort Shalmaneser, fasc. 5 of Ivories from Nimrud (1949–1963)*, ed. M. E. L. Mallowan and D. J. Wiseman (London, 1992), pp. 24–28; Georgina Herrmann, "The Nimrud Ivories 3: The Assyrian Tradition," in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten: XXXIX^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, Heidelberg 6.–10. Juli 1992*, ed. Hartmut Waetzoldt and Harald Hauptmann (Heidelberg, 1997), pp. 285–90, pls. 27–32.
- The only comparable plaque in terms of quality of carving is one discovered at Nimrud. Carved in low relief on the rectangular plaque is a depiction of an Assyrian king, possibly Ashurnasirpal II, wearing the royal headdress and raising a bowl in his right hand (Mallowan and Davies 1970, pl. 1, p. 16).
- Muscarella (1980, pp. 148, 200) suggests that the lower section may have been rounded, in the manner of plaques incised with an image of a winged genie discovered at Nimrud (Mallowan and Davies 1970, nos. 201, 202) and at Hasanlu (Muscarella 1980, pp. 150–51, no. 281).
- Madhloom 1970, pp. 74–76. The king is occasionally shown without his distinctive hat. This omission seems to occur in specific ritual contexts. Tukulti-Ninurta (r. 1234–1207 B.C.) appears without his royal crown on two cult pedestals from Ashur (Anton Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East*, trans. Judith Filson [London and New York, 1969], nos. 246, 247), and Ashurnasirpal II is shown without his crown in a sculpture in the round from the Temple of Ishtar at Nimrud (Curtis and Reade 1995, p. 43, no. 1). On cylinder seals depicting the king banqueting, he is shown bareheaded (Dominique Collon, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum: Cylinder Seals V, Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian Periods* [London, 2001], p. 65).
- Barthel Hrouda, *Die Kulturgeschichte des assyrischen Flachbildes* (Bonn, 1965), p. 44; Madhloom 1970, p. 76.
- See comments by Julian Reade in Curtis and Reade 1995, p. 51. A later Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (r. 669–627 B.C.), appears to have occasionally been depicted wearing only a diadem when engaged in hunting; see R. D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668–627 B.C.)* (London, 1976), pls. XLVI–LIII.
- Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, nos. 27, 28.
- Ibid.*, no. 31.
- Other varieties of genies, including female examples, exist in lesser numbers. The male genies with the heads of humans or birds are usually associated with the term *apkallu*, "wise sage," an apotropaic divinity (Wiggermann 1992, pp. 65–67). For a description of the various genies, see Julian E. Reade, "Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject-Matter," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 10 (1979), pp. 35–43, and Dieter Kolbe, *Die Reliefprogramme religiös-mythologischen Charakters in neuassyrischen Palästen: Die Figurentypen, ihre Benennung und Bedeutung* (Frankfurt, 1981). Such divine figures appear in Assyrian palace wall reliefs and paintings until the seventh century B.C. but are more numerous in the ninth century B.C. than later. This distribution is explained by Irene J. Winter ("Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs," *Studies in Visual Communication* 7 [1981], p. 30) as a consequence of the expansion of the Assyrian empire after the ninth century B.C. and the need for images intelligible to a non-Assyrian audience.
- Indeed, Muscarella (1980, p. 200) compares it with the headband worn by a genie from the Northwest Palace (Madhloom 1970, pl. LXV, no. 3).
- In the ninth century B.C., many court officials are beardless, which may be a sign of fashion or an indication that they are eunuchs. Certain priests seem to have been shaven as a mark of office (Julian E. Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture*, 2nd ed. [London, 1998], p. 43). The few supernatural figures who are beardless may represent female genies (Pauline Albenda, "The Beardless Winged Genies from the Northwest Palace at Nimrud," *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin* 10, no. 1 [1996] pp. 67–78).
- Madhloom 1970, pp. 84–87.
- Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, no. 13.
- Very different genies are found in Rooms I and L of the Northwest Palace: a beardless winged deity with a horned headdress and a heavily fringed garment hanging from the waist (Albenda, "Beardless Winged Genies," pp. 67–78) and a bearded winged genie kneeling in a heavy fringed robe covering one shoulder (Russell 1998, pp. 696–97).

22. See, for example, Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, pl. 8.
23. Other examples include a statue in the round depicting Ashurnasirpal II holding a staff with pommel and tassel (Curtis and Reade 1995, p. 43, no. 1) and relief slabs from the throne room of the Northwest Palace showing the king holding a mace with tassel (Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, no. 13).
24. Janusz Meuszyński, *Räume: B.C.D.E.F.G.H.L.N.P.*, vol. 1 (1981) of *Die Rekonstruktion* 1981–92, pl. 10, nos. G-c-1, G-c-4.
25. Wiggermann 1992, pp. 60, 68.
26. See note 7, above.
27. Images of humans carrying animals for sacrifice are known through the third and second millennia B.C. For example, a figure on a third-millennium B.C. stone plaque from Ur carries a lamb toward a temple (Moortgat, *Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, no. 116); on cylinder seals of the early second millennium B.C., kings carry four-legged animals toward deities (Dominique Collon, *First Impressions: Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East* [London, 1987], nos. 538, 539). A scene incised on a Neo-Assyrian ivory plaque from Nimrud has been interpreted as an offering of animals being led, not carried, in procession (this might equally be a scene of tribute) (Mallowan and Davies 1970, pp. 33–34, no. 85). At Khorsabad a narrative relief depicting an animal hunt shows a man carrying his captured quarry. He carries a gazelle across his shoulders and a hare in his right hand in a very naturalistic manner, very different from the awkward way in which the figure on the Hasanlu plaque holds his animal (Albenda 1986, fig. 76).
28. Samuel Paley and Richard P. Sobolewski, *The Principal Entrances and Courtyards*, vol. 3 (1992) of *Die Rekonstruktion* 1981–92, figs. 1, 2, pls. 1.1, 4.5.
29. The excavator, Austen Henry Layard, suggested that they were stags or goats (*Nineveh and Its Remains, with an Account of a Visit to the Chaldaean Christians of Kurdistan, and the Yezidis, or Devil Worshipers* [London, 1849], vol. 1, p. 75).
30. Neither the bird-headed nor the horned-helmet-wearing genies hold animals.
31. Meuszyński, *Räume*, pl. 3.2, nos. B-30, B-29.
32. The ear of corn has been identified as a palm frond (Barbara Parker Mallowan, “Magic and Ritual in the Northwest Palace Reliefs,” in *Essays on Near Eastern Archaeology in Honor of Charles Kyrle Wilkinson*, ed. Prudence O. Harper and Holly Pittman [New York, 1983], p. 38; Russell 1998, p. 702) because of references to the apotropaic qualities of palm fronds in ritual texts (Wiggermann 1992, pp. 69–70). However, a close viewing of the branch reveals distinct kernels.
33. Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh: From Drawings Made on the Spot* (London, 1849), pl. 47.
34. Samuel M. Paley and Richard P. Sobolewski, “The Outer Façade of the Throne Room of the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud (Kalhu),” in *Assyrien im Wandel der Zeiten*, ed. Waetzoldt and Hauptmann, p. 332.
35. John B. Stearns, *Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II* (Graz, 1961), p. 40, no. A-III-d-ii; R. D. Barnett and M. Falkner, *The Sculptures of Aššur-Nasir-Apli II (883–859 B.C.), Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.), Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.) from the Central and South-West Palaces at Nimrud* (London, 1962), pls. CXXVI, CXXVII.
36. Muscarella 1980, pp. 150–51, no. 281.
37. Albenda 1986, pp. 56–57. Here a genie clasps a small goat or ibex to his chest (façade m, court VI) and holds a branching lotus in his lowered hand. A second example of a genie, holding a goat on this occasion, occurs on the two slabs flanking door Z. (Albenda 1986, p. 57, pl. 63, locates the slab at door Y, which appears to be in disagreement with the excavator’s plan.)
38. Collon, *First Impressions*, no. 347.
39. Julian E. Reade, “The Architectural Context of Assyrian Sculpture,” *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 11 (1980), p. 84.
40. M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains* (New York, 1966), vol. 1, p. 121, fig. 62; B. P. Mallowan, “Magic and Ritual in the Northwest Palace Reliefs,” p. 37. Wiggermann (1992, p. 77) suggests this interpretation “deserves further elaboration.”
41. Richard S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven and London, 1968), p. 44.
42. For a discussion of repeating patterns in Assyrian art, see Irene J. Winter, “Ornament and the ‘Rhetoric of Abundance’ in Assyria,” *Eretz-Israel* 27 (2003), pp. 252–64. For Assyrian-style ivory plaques with a repeated motif of kneeling goats, see Mallowan and Davies 1970, pls. 38, 39.
43. Muscarella 1980, p. 200.
44. Meuszyński, *Räume*, pls. 11–13, nos. H-17a, H-c-2, H-35.
45. Ibid., pl. 10, nos. G-a-1, G-a-2, G-c3, G-c-4.
46. Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, with Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan and the Desert* (London, 1853), pl. facing p. 351.
47. Reade, *Assyrian Sculpture*, p. 38; Russell 1998, p. 674.
48. Russell 1998, pp. 677–78, 707, n. 51. See also comment by Pauline Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting in the Art of the Assyrian Empire*, Cuneiform Monographs 28 (Leiden, 2005), p. 42.
49. Curtis and Reade 1995, pp. 56–57, no. 8; Russell 1998, p. 675.
50. Janusz Meuszyński, “Neo-Assyrian Reliefs from the Central Area of Nimrud Citadel,” *Iraq* 38 (1976), p. 41, pl. 13.
51. François Thureau-Dangin and Maurice Dunand, *Til-Barsib* (Paris, 1936), pl. 48; Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting*, p. 42, pl. 15.
52. Albenda 1986, p. 56.
53. Ibid., p. 57.
54. Thureau-Dangin and Dunand, *Til-Barsib*, pl. 49; Albenda, *Ornamental Wall Painting*, pls. 23, 25.
55. For the Zincirli stele, see Dorit Symington, “Hittite and Neo-Hittite Furniture,” in *The Furniture of Western Asia, Ancient and Traditional: Papers of the Conference Held at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London, June 28 to 30, 1998*, ed. Georgina Herrmann (Mainz, 1996), pl. 31c. For the Nimrud ivories, see Georgina Herrmann, “Ivory Furniture Pieces from Nimrud,” in *Furniture of Western Asia*, ed. Herrmann, pls. 38a, 44a,b,d.
56. John E. Curtis, “Assyrian Furniture: The Archaeological Evidence,” in *Furniture of Western Asia*, ed. Herrmann, pp. 167–80.
57. Mallowan and Davies 1970, pp. 48–53, pls. 61–65. All the plaques are flat except for one openwork example, modeled on the front (Mallowan and Davies 1970, pl. 63, no. 189).
58. For a discussion of the genies and the “sacred tree,” see Russell 1998, pp. 689–96. See also Winter, “Ornament and the ‘Rhetoric of Abundance’ in Assyria,” p. 253 and n. 6.
59. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, vol. 1, pp. 250–51, figs. 216, 217.
60. Muscarella 1980, pp. 150–51, 201, no. 281. Fragments of ivory plaques with remnants of incised decoration suggesting similar imagery are known from Nimrud; see Mallowan and Davies 1970, pl. 26, nos. 90, 91.
61. John E. Curtis, “‘Stützfiguren’ in Mesopotamia,” in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens: Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, ed. Uwe Finkbeiner, Reinhard Dittmann, and Harald Hauptmann (Mainz, 1995), pp. 79–80, pl. 14g.

62. Gordon Loud, *Khorsabad*, pt. 1, *Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate* (Chicago, 1936), fig. 41.
63. Assyrian texts and images make clear that abundance was believed to issue from the gods through their chosen king. See Winter, “Ornament and the ‘Rhetoric of Abundance’ in Assyria.”
64. It should be noted that the ivory plaque is quite abraded, which suggests that it had been in use for some years before the destruction of Hasanlu.
65. As suggested by Muscarella (1980, pp. 212–13).
66. *The Histories* 1.14.